

# FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS

## *Strengthening the Role of Fathers to Help Reduce Child Poverty*

### **Statistics on family breakdown are alarming:**

- The divorce rate is over 50 percent.
- In recent decades, cohabitation is up and marriage is down.
- In approximately 84 percent of cases in which a parent is absent, that parent is the father.
- Approximately 19.4 million children do not live with their dads.

### **Growing up without a father is a strong predictor of child poverty:**

- The poverty rate for children of never-married parents was 55 percent in 2003.
- Children in married-couple families had a much lower poverty rate (8.6% in 2003).
- Children growing up without two parents are more likely to drop out of school, use drugs, commit crimes, live in poverty, commit suicide, and have children outside of marriage.

### **Fatherhood programs will help:**

- According to the most recent data, the trends in fatherlessness that have risen steadily over the last 35 years finally began to level off in the late 1990s.
- The President's plan and the Republican bill add to recent gains in father involvement by establishing new fatherhood grant programs, funded at \$20 million annually to:
  - improve the job skills of low-income fathers;
  - promote marriage among parents;
  - help fathers establish positive relationships with their children and the children's mothers; and
  - enlist faith-based and community groups to provide support to fathers and families.
- The decline of the family didn't occur overnight. Reversing this trend will take time.
- States, community groups, and others need to work together to strengthen families. Some kids will be permanently disadvantaged if they grow up without knowing their fathers. This legislation explores ways to address this issue.